

20 Points of New Hampshire Military History

**at the
New Hampshire
State Veterans Cemetery**

**110 Daniel Webster Highway
Boscawen, NH 03303
NH State Veterans Cemetery**



1680 and the Beginning of a New Hampshire Militia

In 1680, when New Hampshire's political leaders began to form a provincial government, one of their first orders of business was to create a militia. All men over the age of 16 were expected to join one of the four town militia companies, and every member of a militia company was to equip himself properly to "encounter, expel, repel and resist, by force of arms" any potential enemy. Subsequent legislation made changes to militia organization, but the concept of a citizen-soldier defense force was firmly in place.



The Wars for Empire: Louisbourg and Number Four

Prior to 1776, New Hampshire was part of the British Empire, and was involved in the wars for empire between the British and the French. Part of the British strategy was to capture French strongholds in the St. Lawrence Valley. In 1745, 500 New Hampshire volunteers joined 3,500 volunteers from other New England states and captured the seemingly impregnable French fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island. During times of war, the New Hampshire militia was expected to defend New Hampshire towns against raiding parties of French soldiers and their Indian allies. One of the more dramatic raids took place in March 1747, when militia Captain Phineas Stevens and his ranging party of thirty men defended a New Hampshire fort known simply as Number Four, located at present-day Charlestown, against a much larger force of French soldiers and Indians. Stevens lost no men while successfully defending the fort.



Rogers' Rangers and the Beginning of Special Forces

In 1757, the French Indian War defied the traditions of civilized combat common to Europe. The primitive and unconventional fighting style of New Hampshire settlers was initiated by frontier Ranger units. Major Robert Rogers and Captain John Stark formed one of these units known as Rogers Rangers. Robert Rogers (1731-1795) and John Stark (1728-1822) and their New Hampshire volunteers were the eyes and ears of the British Forces in the Saint Lawrence Valley, culminating in the successful raid on the main village of Saint Francis, Canada in 1760. The fighting style of the Rangers proved successful in winning this war. The French would relinquish any further desire to govern the British held colonies. John Stark, a farmer turned soldier, was a Company Commander in Rogers Rangers. He later fought in the American Revolution seeking independence from England and commanded New Hampshire volunteers at the Battle of Bunker Hill and the Battle of Bennington in Vermont. John Stark, the fighting General, coined the State Motto: "Live Free or Die"!



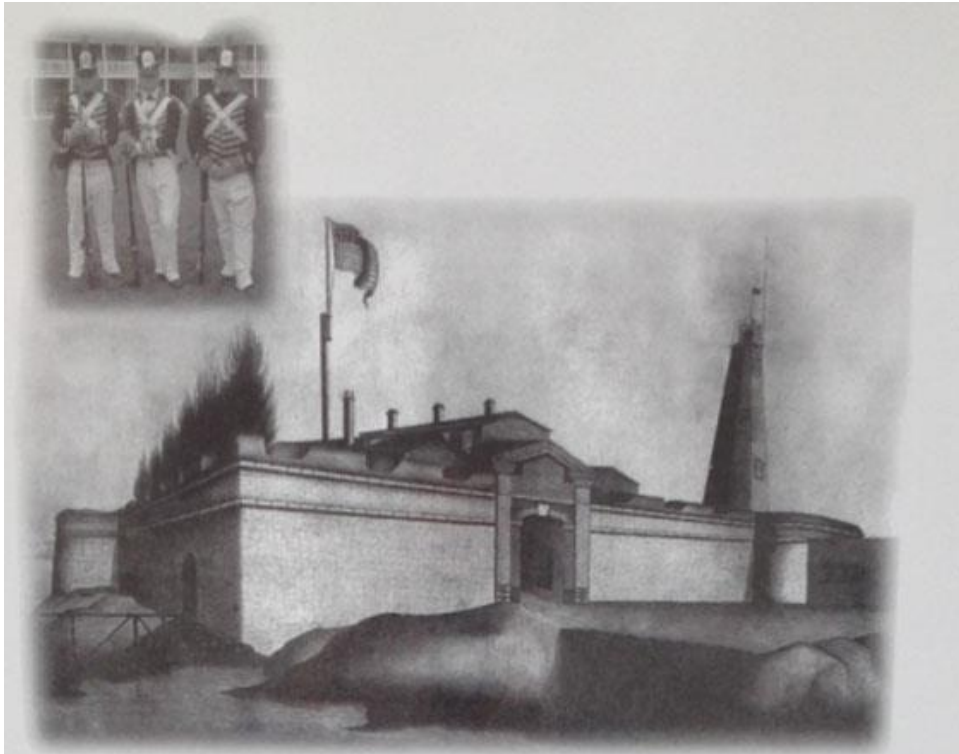
The Powder Raids on Fort William and Mary

Throughout 1774, New Hampshire patriots became increasingly alarmed by the actions of the British Government. By the year's end the Royal Government in New Hampshire was virtually powerless. When news arrived in December that a British warship might take possession of Fort William and Mary, located in New Castle at the mouth of the Piscataqua River, two bands of patriots on two successive days stormed the fort and removed its gunpowder and arms. The powder raids of December 14 and 15, 1774, have been called the first overt acts of the American Revolution.



Breed's Hill and the Beginning of the United States Navy

American leaders moved closer to formally declaring independence from Great Britain. However, America was not ready for war, lacking both trained infantry units and a professional navy. New Hampshire sent three regiments of volunteers to Boston in the wake of fighting at Concord and Lexington, many of whom participated in the battle at Breed's, or Bunker, Hill on June 17, 1775. Meanwhile, Portsmouth shipbuilder John Langdon (1741-1819) received contracts to build the first vessels for a new navy. His ship, the *Raleigh*, was the first vessel built for the nation's navy, and it is memorialized in the New Hampshire State Seal. His second vessel, the *Ranger*, was built and equipped for John Paul Jones.



The War of 1812: Mr. Madison's War

President Madison was in office when the second war with England broke out in 1812. New Hampshire was divided on the war. Federalist state leaders on the Seacoast and in the Connecticut Valley were well disposed toward England. They were opposed to "Mr. Madison's War." Jeffersonian Republicans in the Merrimack Valley favored France, and they advocated going to war against England. In the end, both sides agreed on the need to defend Portsmouth against a possible British attack. Toward that end, new fortifications were constructed, including the Martello tower, known as Castle Walbach, built near Fort Constitution and the lighthouse on New Castle Island.



Brigadier General
Franklin Pierce

Franklin Pierce and the War with Mexico

When war broke out between the United States and Mexico in 1846, most people in New Hampshire were opposed. They believed that any new territory acquired from Mexico would simply enhance the political power of the southern, slaveholding states. Yet New Hampshire's Franklin Pierce (1804 - 1869) believed in the United States' doctrine of Manifest Destiny to extend its territorial claims to the Pacific Ocean. Pierce was quick to volunteer for service in the war; he was a general serving under General Winfield Scott at the surrender of Mexico City in 1847. When he ran for President in 1852, he wore his old Mexican War uniform for his formal photograph. Franklin Pierce served as President of the United States from 1853 to 1857.



Colonel Edward E. Cross



The Great Rebellion, The New Hampshire Response, and Edward Cross

On April 12, 1861, the artillery of the Confederate States of America opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina's Charleston Harbor starting the Civil War. New Hampshire was quick to respond mustering 17 volunteer infantry units that included units of light and heavy artillery, cavalry, and sharpshooters. Additionally, New Hampshire sent more than 1,000 soldiers and sailors to serve in the Marines and Navy. In all, more than 37,000 New Hampshire men and women served the Union cause. None was more gallant than the commander of the Fighting Fifth, Colonel Edward E. Cross (1832 - 1863) who died while leading his men on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg.



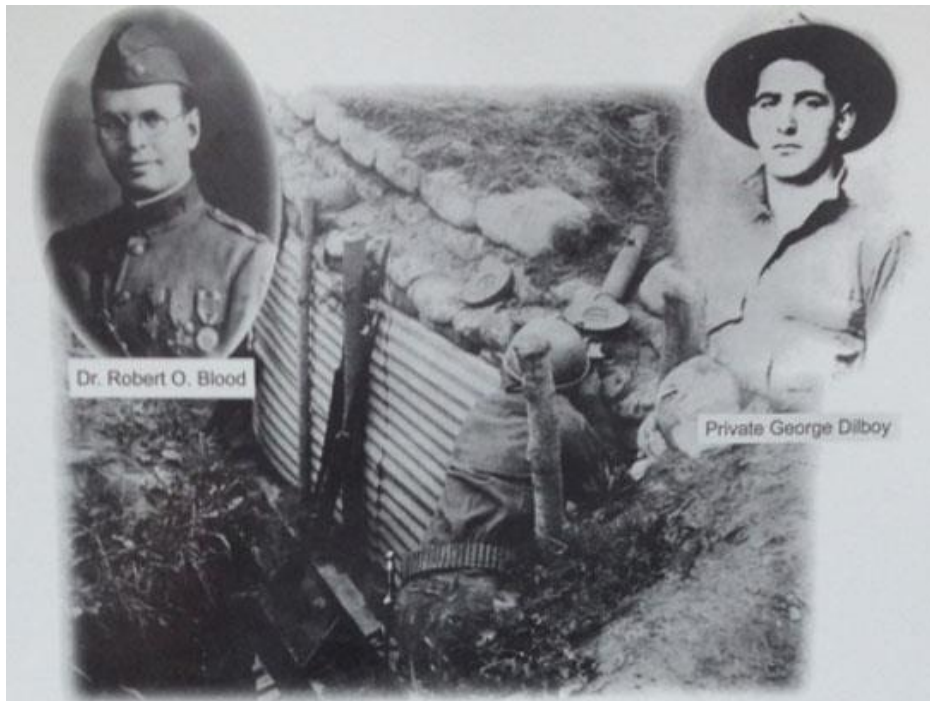
Harriet Patience Dame and the Origins of Combat Nursing

During the Civil War, New Hampshire regiments kept their state identity, even though they served in armies commanded by federally appointed generals. New Hampshire's Second Regiment served longer than any other New Hampshire regiment. When it went south in 1861, the Second New Hampshire was accompanied by a thirty-seven-year-old woman, Harriet P. Dame (1815-1900). She was styled a "hospital matron," but she stayed with the front line troops, tending the needs of wounded soldiers under fire. She was taken prisoner twice, and once led wounded men to safety on a nighttime march. Although serving in a number of capacities during the war, she always loved the Second New Hampshire, donating the money for the regimental cottage at the Weirs in Laconia in 1886.



The Birth of the New Hampshire National Guard

After the Civil War, the New Hampshire militia had to be reconstructed. The first two units of infantry were joined by a third when the New Hampshire National Guard was formed in the 1878 legislative session. Much of the militia, or National Guard, was mustered for the Spanish-American War in 1898. After the reorganization of the New Hampshire National Guard in 1907, the First New Hampshire Infantry was sent to the Mexican border in search of Pancho Villa. The New Hampshire National Guard was serving both the needs of the state and of the nation.



The First World War

"The war to end all wars" was the phrase that was heard worldwide by everyone. Roughly 20,000 New Hampshire men and women served. Two New Hampshire men serving in France in 1918 brought honor to our State for their heroism and bravery. Private George Dilboy (1896-1918) of Keene was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, our nation's highest award for valor. Private Dilboy eliminated a German Machine Gun emplacement that had his unit under scathing fire. He died of mortal wounds while saving his unit from certain death. Captain Robert O. Blood (1887-1975) was a Medical Doctor and Field Surgeon serving in France. His acts of valor were recognized because of his courage in treating wounded soldiers on the battlefield away from his protected aid station. Captain Blood was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest award for valor. Doctor Blood was discharged and returned to his medical practice in New Hampshire. He was elected to the office of Governor and served from 1941-1945.



Corporal Rene Gagnon

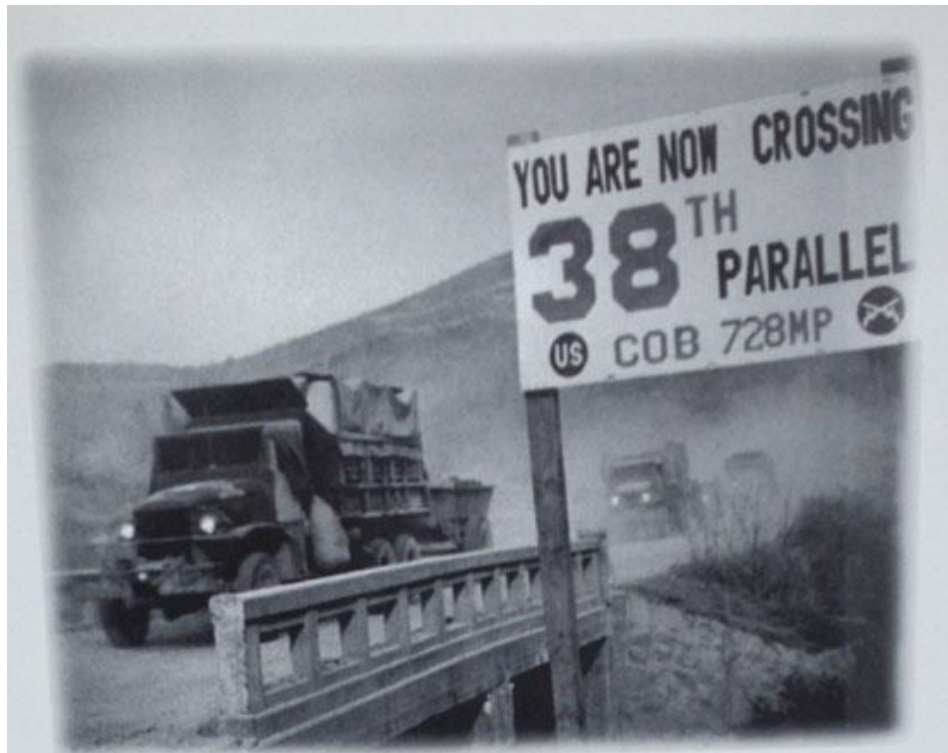
World War II: The Total War and Corporal Rene Gagnon

Almost 60,000 New Hampshire men and women joined the Armed Forces during World War II, roughly one out of every eight residents of the state. The state's two National Guard units saw distinguished service in both the Pacific and European Theaters. New Hampshire citizens also joined this total war, whether by watching for enemy aircraft, collecting scrap metal, buying war bonds, or simply doing without certain foods and consumer goods. No one symbolized the American spirit of World War II better than the men who raised the American flag on Mount Suribachi on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima, on February 23, 1945. One was from Manchester - Marine Corporal Rene Gagnon (1925 - 1979).



The Air National Guard

The Army Air Corps began to deactivate units and retire planes and pilots after World War II, as tension associated with the Cold War convinced political and military leaders that a modern Air Force was needed - one that included a national guard. By October 1946, a fighter squadron was assigned to the Adjutant General of New Hampshire and designated the New Hampshire Air National Guard. The unit was stationed at Grenier Field, south of Manchester. By 1960, the New Hampshire Air National Guard had been converted to a military transport group. The group moved to Pease Air Force Base by 1966, and in 1975 was flying KC-135 stratotankers to refuel aircraft in flight. The 157th Air Refueling Wing has been recognized as the best in the Air National Guard.



Korea: The Forgotten War

American Cold War strategy called for the United States to contain the spread of communism. In the summer of 1950, when troops from communist North Korea invaded and overran much of noncommunist South Korea, the strategy was tested. United States troops, supported by the United Nations, repelled the North Korean assault, driving the enemy up the length of the Korean peninsula. At which point Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River, driving the outnumbered American and United Nations forces back into South Korea. Battle lines eventually stabilized near the 38th parallel, the original line separating North and South Korea. At least 8,000 New Hampshire soldiers served in Korea between 1950 and 1953.



Pease Air Force Base and the Strategic Air Command

In 1950, people in New Hampshire learned of plans to build a large air base in Newington and Portsmouth, which would house long-range bombers of the Strategic Air Command. Plans called for runways greater than 2 miles in length and housing for 7,000 military and civilian personnel. Roughly \$83 million was devoted to the largest construction project in New Hampshire history. Groundbreaking took place in 1954. On September 7, 1957, the base was formally dedicated and named for Captain Harl Pease (1917 - 1942) a Plymouth native who was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously in World War II. Pease closed as a Strategic Air Command base and home of the famous 509th Bomber Wing in 1991, although it remains home to the New Hampshire Air National Guard.



Vietnam: America's Longest War

The American policy of containing communism led to the United States support for an independent, noncommunist South Vietnam. American civilian and military advisors began arriving in South Vietnam in the 1950s. By 1965, President Johnson decided to block further communist aggression in South Vietnam by using American air, naval, and ground troops. Eventually, more than 500,000 American soldiers were stationed in South Vietnam. For the United States, the war dragged on until 1973. For Vietnam, the war and the government of South Vietnam lasted until 1975. More than 500 New Hampshire National Guardsmen were sent to Vietnam in September 1968. New Hampshire's 3rd Battalion 197th Field Artillery was the largest National Guard unit from the Northeast to serve in Vietnam.



Desert Shield/Desert Storm

As the Cold War came to an end, the United States remained the one true superpower capable of military intervention anywhere in the world. When Saddam Hussein of Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait in 1990, the United States chose to punish the aggressor. Early in 1991, the United States led a 28-nation coalition against the Iraqi leader. Following a massive military buildup in the region, the American-led coalition attacked Iraq with bombs and missiles. This was followed by a brief and decisive ground attack, which overwhelmed the Iraqi forces. The 157th Air Refueling Wing flew 322 sorties during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Meanwhile, the 744th Transportation Company stationed in Hillsborough, Claremont, and Somersworth was sent to Saudi Arabia. Company B, 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment and the Mobile Inshore Undersea Warfare Unit 202 of the U.S. Naval Reserve, both of Manchester, also served in the Persian Gulf.



Operation Enduring Freedom

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), an international military campaign initiated to eliminate the militant group, al Qaeda and their affiliated supporters who were responsible for the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States. Joining the effort, a coalition of several nations was formed. Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan began in October 2001 to oust the Taliban government and their al Qaeda supporters. United States and NATO forces aggressively engaged al Qaeda and Taliban forces and were successful in establishing security in the region. Several engagements continued to eliminate al Qaeda and Taliban units who refused to support the newly formed democratic government. New Hampshire National Guard and Reserve components were mobilized and deployed to Afghanistan to serve along side active duty counterparts. Many Guard and Reserve personnel served multiple tours of duty in support of this operation.



Operation Iraqi Freedom

In March 2003, an air/ground invasion of Iraq was launched. The dictatorship of Saddam Hussein was ruthless and posed great danger to the Iraqi people and democratic nations worldwide. The possibility of Iraq processing "weapons of mass destruction" in the hands of a powerful dictator who also had terror cells in training created a call to action. Saddam Hussein's Iraqi government and al Qaeda affiliated groups dissolved in April 2003. The US and NATO coalition continued to battle insurgent uprisings who were determined to fight the New Democratic government of Iraq. New Hampshire citizen soldiers once again answered the call. Several Army and Air National Guard and Reserve Component units were mobilized and deployed to both Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq. Many experienced multiple deployments in support of their total force mission to suppress world terrorism.



New Hampshire Recipients of the Medal of Honor

On July 12, 1863, in the wake of the Battle of Gettysburg, Congress authorized the Medal of Honor. The medal is to be "presented by the President, in the name of the congress of the United States, to a member of the armed forces, who distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty." As of Veterans Day, November 11, 2003, fifty-nine New Hampshire men had been awarded the Medal of Honor, five posthumously.